

#### *D. Haiti*

In September, 1998, Haiti was struck by Hurricane Georges. At least 167 people died and more than 60 people were missing and presumed dead. Millions of dollars in damages occurred to private and public property. The storm caused massive agricultural losses.

FEMA contributed to the USAID mission's Intermediate Result #5, "Increased Local Capacity within Haiti to Deal with Recurring Disasters," by working to "strengthen the national government's capacity to respond to disasters" and to "strengthen local community organizations and promote local, community-based mitigation."

##### 1. National Emergency Management System

FEMA's goal was to assist Haiti in strengthening its emergency management system at the national level by working with the country's national emergency management agency, the Ministry of Interior and Territorial Collectivities' Directorate of Civil Protection (DPC). FEMA proceeded with the project by bringing in a team of experts to conduct an initial needs assessment. From the needs assessment, information on the country's emergency management system was collected, and potential activities were identified. Following the needs assessment, representatives from the Ministry of Interior and from local NGOs were invited to participate in a FEMA sponsored one-week summit on emergency management in June 2000. The institutional issues that were considered were the national response plan, national emergency management laws and regulations and the national emergency operations center. FEMA proposed working with the DPC to review the existing national response plan, and emergency management laws and regulations, emergency operations center (EOC), and to find ways to improve them in order to give the DPC a greater capability to respond to a national emergency.

FEMA and the DPC made progress toward this goal because of the active and dynamic leadership of the DPC and the welcome engagement of the USAID mission in Port-au-Prince. However, we were not able to achieve all of our objectives because of logistical, travel, and communications difficulties encountered throughout the project. These challenges were accentuated by the lack of resources that the Government of Haiti has to allocate to emergency management, and by the fact that FEMA did not have a permanent presence in Haiti and. The decision was made early on not to fund a position in Haiti, due to the limited resources FEMA had for this project. However, because of the demands placed on the small DPC staff, it was difficult for them to focus on our joint project when we were not in-country.

After conducting the initial needs assessment, FEMA's project stalled. It was difficult to communicate with the DPC, and several technical assistance visits were cancelled because of difficulty reserving flights and because of civil unrest in the country. The solution was to bring representatives of the Ministry of Interior and the USAID mission to Washington for a second visit in April of 2001 to provide technical assistance on the subject of emergency management and to draft a detailed work plan for the remainder of the project. This project resulted in agreement to focus on the development of a national response plan, a national emergency operations center (EOC), development of a new legal framework, and training activities.

Of these items, the most progress was made on the drafting of a new legal framework to institutionalize the role of Haitian Government ministries in emergency management and in the development of a national response plan to operate this system. FEMA's legal consultant worked closely with Ministry of Interior lawyers to develop the legal framework that is to be presented to the Parliament, and FEMA experts reviewed emergency management plans and documents that had been developed in Haiti (including the National Risk and Disaster Management Plan and the Hurricane Response Plan). FEMA was impressed with the groundwork that had been laid by the dedicated work of the DPC with the support of organizations such as the United Nations Development Program and the USAID mission. FEMA identified an opportunity to build on this foundation by developing an all-hazards response plan that would encompass and direct response actions for all types of disasters and emergencies when local and Departmental capabilities are exceeded. The Plan establishes 9 Emergency Support Functions, to be administered by Ministries of the Government of Haiti.

This is based on the model of the U.S. Federal Response Plan. The foundation of the U.S. Federal Response Plan is to divide national government agencies into functional areas of responsibility. This philosophy has evolved in the U.S. because FEMA's experiences prior to 1993 illustrated the difficulties of coordinating and organizing a government disaster response effort based on the activities of individual agencies. Multiple agencies with overlapping responsibilities in many different areas of response weakened the government's ability to operate effectively. Because of these difficulties, FEMA worked with 27 other federal agencies and the American Red Cross to draft the Federal Response Plan. This plan provides an efficient mechanism for coordinating the delivery of Federal assistance and resources to augment efforts of our State and local governments overwhelmed by a major disaster or emergency.

The basis of the U.S. Federal Response Plan is that government agencies are incorporated into a structured Incident Command System. This system consists of twelve Emergency Support Functions (ESFs) that may be needed to respond to a technological or natural disaster. These functions include

Transportation, Communications, Public Works and Engineering, Firefighting, Information and Planning, Mass Care, Resource Support, Health and Medical Services, Urban Search and Rescue, Hazardous Materials, Food, and Energy.

Under this system, one government agency takes the lead for a specific response “function” and coordinates directly with that function’s support agencies. Therefore, in a FEMA EOC, technical professionals representing each lead agency staff each function. These technical professionals are responsible for delivering the assistance required in their functional area. This system simplifies the coordination and delivery of resources and diminishes duplication of effort. It makes FEMA’s mission of coordinating the entire government’s response to disasters much more manageable.

Haiti’s response plan was therefore organized based on these same principles and was developed to meet the following objectives:

1. Assign and identify the emergency response and support roles and responsibilities of individual government organizations.
2. Following a disaster, immediate response operations to save lives, protect property, and meet basic human needs have precedence over recovery and mitigation. However, initial recovery planning should commence at once in tandem with response operations. Actual recovery operations will be initiated commensurate with government priorities and based on availability of resources immediately required for response operations.
3. In recognition that certain response and recovery activities may be conducted concurrently, coordination at all levels is essential to ensure consistent governmental actions throughout the disaster.
4. Mitigation opportunities should be actively considered throughout disaster operations. Decisions made during response and recovery operations can either enhance or hinder subsequent mitigation activities.

The document establishes a framework for development of a process for systematic, coordinated and effective national government response to natural disasters and emergencies by:

1. Outlines fundamental policies, planning assumptions, concepts of operations, response actions, and National Government responsibilities.
2. Describes some of the resources that are available to augment Departmental and local efforts to save lives, and to protect the public health, safety and property.

3. Describes a framework process for implementing and managing National response programs.
4. Serves as the foundation for development of additional plans and procedures to implement National response activities rapidly and efficiently.

The general concept of operation for the plan is that Local and Departmental responders handle most disasters and emergencies. The National Government is called upon to provide supplemental assistance when the consequences of a disaster exceed local and Departmental capabilities. If needed, the National Government can mobilize an array of resources to support Departmental and local resources.

The response plan was developed over months of work in Washington supplemented by visits to Haiti to consult with the DPC and with Government Ministries. FEMA engaged the help of the Florida Association of Voluntary Agencies for Caribbean Action, Inc. (FAVA/CA) and the Pan American Development Foundation who brought an in-depth understanding of the Haitian government to the project. A final draft of the plan was completed, but FEMA ran out of time to return to Haiti to hold an exercise with all participating government ministries to validate and practice their roles.

Another important component to this project that remains to be realized is the creation of a national emergency operations center (EOC). After the establishment of an effective system, and the agreement on a response plan outlining the roles of government agencies, such a facility is one of the most crucial tools for actual managing and coordinating disaster response and recovery. A FEMA team made an initial assessment of proposed EOC site (an OPDES building in Port-au-Prince), but was not able to acquire all of the information necessary to prepare an EOC design plan that would include recommendations for organizational and structural changes, equipment purchases, and operational suggestions to modernize and improve emergency management capabilities before the end of the project. Instead, FEMA and the USAID mission in Port-au-Prince decided that FEMA would use some of its remaining funds to purchase basic office equipment that the DPC could use to strengthen increase its operating capabilities. FEMA also provided the Ministry of Interior with hurricane tracking software.

Finally, FEMA delivered the training discussed at the April 2001 meeting with national government officials as part of its Project Impact activities in Jacmel that are discussed below.

## 2. Building Disaster Resistant Communities

FEMA entered into a cooperative agreement with the Pan American Development Foundation (PADF) in Haiti. This organization has extensive

background in Haiti and, in addition to the assistance that PADF offered in FEMA's project with the DPC (mentioned above), the NGO did a very good job of facilitating Project impact activities in Haiti.

Jacmel was chosen as the Project Impact location because of its history of community/private sector activism, interest in mitigation, a strong likelihood of achieving success that can be duplicated on a larger scale, and because it suffers repeated damage from Hurricanes. In addition, USAID was engaged in projects in the surrounding Department, and Project Impact in the city and immediate areas around Jacmel was seen as a strong complement. The project benefited from the active engagement of the private sector, the involvement of the Delege, and the interest of the DPC. It serves as an model of steps that can be taken in Haitian communities to make them more disaster resistant, and FEMA is pleased that USAID has provided PADF with additional funding to continue mitigation projects.

Through the dedication and leadership of the Pan American Development Foundation (PADF), Jacmel has had a successful Project Impact initiative. Many partners have become involved with the initiative in Jacmel, and the residents are very pleased, in particular with the building of the fire station and the riverbank protection at Bassin Caiman. Jacmel has done a great job finding partners, especially on the firehouse construction project and firefighting training initiative. Partners were found among local businesses, local residents, the city, the Southeast Department, the national government, the U.S. government, the State of Florida, a sister city in Strasbourg, France and a firefighting organization in Canada. More than 20 partners, representing four countries were identified for this project.

***Projects:***

Local disaster committees were created/strengthened in Jacmel and surrounding communities

Developed an Action Plan –this is a thorough plan that identifies hazards, assesses vulnerabilities and identifies actions that need to be taken to protect Jacmel.

Built a fire station –Jacmel has one fire truck, which has not had a permanent home. This project will provide a safe place to park the truck and an additional bay has been added. It will be better protected so that it can better respond to emergencies. This project has been widely supported by the community and many partners have participated.

Implemented an education program –thousands of pamphlets have been distributed on what to do before, during and after a disaster; a booklet has been written in Creole and disseminated to elementary school on disaster preparedness; one-day seminars have been held with journalists to discuss disaster preparedness; radio and television shows have aired mitigation and preparedness segments.

Created and trained Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) –two CERTs were organized and twenty students participated in four training modules. CERT members participated in a day-long training exercise where they demonstrated first-aid, search and rescue techniques, and fire suppression skills. Jacmel now has a trained and motivated core of volunteers, who will help reduce casualties, protect property and provide support to their communities, when future disasters strike. The Jacmel CERT program is a model in Haiti that will be duplicated in other cities.

Protected the river bank at Bassin Caiman – The main highway leading into Jacmel from Port-au-Prince has often been flooded. As the highway approaches town, it is in danger of being undercut by the river. Each flooding event scours out more of the roadbed. The leadership of the town has been concerned for several years that another hurricane would wash away the road, and vegetation and floodwater would then flow into downtown Jacmel. This project consisted of placing a gabion wall, parallel to the main road leading in to town from the north; placing fill material between the gabion and two large trees, which were being undercut by the river. The project should reduce flooding problems in the area.

Protected the Hydroelectric Dam –one of Jacmel’s electricity plants is located next to a river and at the base of a mountain. The plant is vulnerable to flooding and landslides. In cooperation with the Canadian Agency for International Development (ACDI), a joint project was devised to protect the electricity plant. ACDI placed gabions, parallel to the river, which will protect the plant from flooding. The Project Impact effort included the following soil conservation practices on the mountain: Reforestation with 30,000 trees on 80 hectares, building 6.7 kilometers of dry walls and 59.5 kilometers of living walls, planting 400 bamboo plants and building 816 gully plugs. The combined projects will minimize the electricity plant’s vulnerability to flooding and landslides/mudslides.